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RUMANIA'S INDEPENDENT STAND AT THE UN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

At the beginning of the current UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva, Rumania has taken a markedly independent stand, again asserting its intention to promote its national interests even if they diverge from Soviet aims. In a statement to the conference on 2 April, the chief Rumanian delegate refrained from echoing major Soviet-backed policy positions and emphasized Rumania's role as a developing country and its identity of economic interests with other such countries.

1. Background

In recent years, Rumania's economic interests and national aspirations have increasingly dictated a more independent and self-assertive position within the Soviet Bloc. Rumania has been fearful lest Khrushchev's ambitious plans for a more fully integrated Bloc inhibit its own industrial progress, which has been unusually rapid in recent years. It is Rumania's position that the authority to plan its own economic development in all its aspects is one of the "fundamental, essential and inalienable" attributes of national sovereignty. Moreover, Rumania has asserted that a "leveling" of economic development among Bloc countries through the forced broad-scale industrialization of its lesser developed members, must be a precondition for the worldwide construction of Communism.

2. Position at UNCTAD

The statement to the conference on 2 April of Gogu Radulescu, Rumania's chief delegate to the conference, 1/ was as notable for what it omitted as it was for what is said. Radulescu quickly identified Rumania with other developing countries by affirming its support for measures to stabilize world prices of raw materials and improve their terms of trade; by proposing the creation of a fund for industrial development under the UN; by stressing the need to equalize the level of economic development of all countries; and by urging that industrial countries extend credits to manufacturing enterprises in developing countries and accept repayment in commodities produced by the aided enterprises. Radulescu reiterated Rumania's policy of diversified industrialization, which he maintained had successfully removed it as "one of the European appendices for raw materials and agricultural products of the industrialized countries," and asserted that all economic relations must be based on "national sovereignty, economic independence, equality in

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rights and noninterference in domestic affairs" -- the latter an oblique reference to Rumanian charges that Moscow seeks to use CEMA as an instrument of control over the economic policies of Communist states.* Moreover, according to one source, a minor "scandal" was created within the Bloc delegations when Rumania suggested grouping the nations at the conference "according to their level of economic development, irrespective of their social orders or trade system" and, in concert with Cuba, Albania, Israel, Australia, and Greece, asked to be associated with the 75 less developed countries. 2/

Equally significant was the absence of any reference in Radulescu's speech to the USSR, CEMA, or the Communist camp. Moreover, in sharp contrast to other Soviet Bloc presentations, the statement by Radulescu did not inveigh against alleged Western-imposed restrictions on East-West trade; did not expressly indorse the Principles of Trade Relations and Trade Policy submitted by the USSR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia; and virtually ignored the Soviet-sponsored proposal for a new international trade organization, vaguely suggesting instead the creation of "appropriate international machinery."

Even though other Communist delegates had anticipated that Rumania would pursue an independent line at the conference, the extent of its divergence from the policy positions of other Communist states reportedly evoked considerable consternation in Bloc circles, prompting the leader of the Czechoslovak delegation to exclaim, "Radulescu must be out of his mind." A member of the permanent Rumania delegation in Geneva, when queried about the nonconformist character of Radulescu's speech, reportedly replied: "What did you find extraordinary in the speech? We are a free country. We have some good ideas, and we presented them. We don't have to mention the USSR every time we speak. And as for COMECON [CEMA], as you know, we have our own economic needs and are against a common plan for all." 3/

* In a possible effort to win added support for their views in CEMA, the Rumanians, in their policy statement on 26 April, proposed the membership of all Communist countries in the organization -- even Communist China -- and the participation of non-Communist less developed countries that are proceeding on "a path of noncapitalist development." Such new membership in CEMA would increase the number of less developed countries whose interests presumably would parallel those of Rumania.